USING COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO RE-CONNECT DISCONNECTED YOUTH

W. Norton Grubb

Executive Summary

In developing a coherent program for disconnected youth, foundations should focus on improvements in community colleges. They should avoid creating "little programs", either in colleges or in community-based organizations, that have little chance of reforming basic practices. Then specific reforms could include the following:

Bridge programs or transitional colleges would prepare youth who are not ready for community colleges themselves. These could be created either as non-credit divisions of colleges; as linkages between community-based organizations and colleges; or even as links between colleges and either adult programs or area vocational schools.

Several specific practices need support and reform, no matter where programs for disconnected youth take place:

• Developmental education needs to be strengthened, to move away from "skills and drills".

• Guidance and counseling needs improvement, particularly for undecided students and "experimenters".

• Financial aid offices should be strengthened.

• Support services generally need to improve, perhaps following the K-12 model of comprehensive or one-stop service centers.

• Teaching needs to be improved to meet the needs of non-traditional students.

• Work-based learning could be strengthened, as a form of career exploration, a source of income, and a place to learn "soft skills".

Several complementary policies, outside of education, also need to be strengthened, especially to resolve the work-family-schooling dilemma that many community college students experience. These include child care policies, Family Support Centers, and improved access to income support (reversing the trend toward Work First) or better-paid employment.

California, with its large community college system, presents a special challenge. Here, the foundations might use their convening power to form a group — one third from California colleges, one third from other California groups, and one third from colleges outside California — to develop a plan for reconstructing governance and policy.

While there are several ways to establish priorities among these reforms, one approach would be to fund several colleges to develop their own approaches to incorporating disconnected youth, but specifying that certain reforms be included — especially a bridge program of some sort; reforms in developmental education; some efforts to enhance support services including guidance and counseling; and efforts to develop work-based learning.

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This country has (almost) given up on reducing inequality. The antipathy to "welfare" and the harsh measures of the 1996 welfare "reforms", the lackluster state of anti-discrimination policy, the inability to legislate serious revisions in health care, the lack of any coherent housing policy or urban development agenda, the demise of job training programs, and the weak state of unions are all indicators of a weak welfare state and of dwindling commitment to equity — all reflected in increasing inequality over the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s. About the only anti-poverty strategy that has much political power is the improvement of education, or equality of educational opportunity — particularly since this approach can harness the rhetoric of what I call the Education Gospel, the belief in education as the solution to a variety of social and individuals issues including international competitiveness and the creation of the "workforce of the 21st century" (Grubb and Lazerson, in progress).

The sole emphasis on educational solutions is incomplete, of course, as I discuss in Section III of this note, but at least it provides a widely-accepted starting point. And so, as the foundations contemplate ways of improving the opportunities for disconnected youth — those 16 to 24, out of school and out of work (or in marginal, dead-end work), at a critical juncture in their lives — educational improvements provide an appealing solution, particularly since most of these disconnected youth (DY,

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for short) lack many of the competencies necessary for participation in the "workforce of the 21st century", or in political life.

In considering what specifically could be done for DY, it's worth clarifying two contrary impulses in this country for addressing social issues. One has been the creation of comprehensive public institutions like public colleges and comprehensive high schools. These have the advantages of more or less uniform coverage, some mechanisms of quality control including professional standards, public oversight and governance, and relative stability. This has been the approach in education system, juvenile justice, the creation of a monetary system, legislative and judicial systems, and on and on.

The other impulse has been to create voluntary, or community-based, or informal and non-bureaucratic organizations, less distant from their "clients". This has been the vision underlying adult education (Kett, 1994), a lot of job training and workforce development, youth development programs, and community-based organizations (CBOs) generally. These are political in quite a different sense, publicly funded only indirectly (and even more poorly funded than public institutions); there are usually no external quality standards since by construction these are private and anti-bureaucratic organizations. Their quality ranges from the wretched to the sublime, with even greater variations that even public institutions display.

My view is that the second approach overall has been incredibly ineffective. It has resulted in the creation of many small, evanescent programs — "little programs" — highly uneven in their coverage, with one exemplar here, another there, but nothing uniform. Many such programs have very small or zero effects on measurable outcomes — job training and adult ed are two good examples, and there's no good evidence for any of the youth development efforts — and many of them are structured so badly that they couldn't possibly be effective. Job training programs, for example, are too short, too cut off from discussions about pedagogy and from mainstream education efforts to ever amount to anything; many of them are disconnected from local employers as well, providing low level skills despite increasing demand for" higher-order skills" and

"skills of the 21st century". Many of them depend on a charismatic leader or "star"; they fall apart when the "star" leaves, and they can't be replicated. These are *programs, not institutions* — and the advantage of trying to build institutions is that they endure and can be improved, whereas programs come and go — mostly go. While many foundations seem to search out new versions of these small community-based programs, often run by charismatic figures, this isn't a solution that has worked well. Instead I propose that Hewlett's efforts focus on improving public institutions, using community-based organizations when it seems appropriate and when CBOs can be used to strengthen dimensions of educational institutions that have proved difficult to improve through public funds. This overall strategy would be more likely to create *institutionalized* solutions to the problems of disconnected youth, ones that are relatively widespread and can endure.

For me, the educational institution that merits such attention is the community college.[1] It's ubiquitous, and located within commuting distance of most individuals (except perhaps in rural areas); it provides a vast variety of offerings through public funding; it already serves a "bridge" function in allowing individuals who enroll for some purposes (dislocated workers, or those needing remediation) to continue for other goals; it is fairly well institutionalized; it leads not only to certificates and Associate degrees of its own, and provides other shorter-term certificates, but also provides access to the mainstream of the education system and the baccalaureate degree; and community colleges have a commitment — rhetorical if not always real — to serving every segment of the community. Other educational institutions are not good candidates: for most 16 - 24 year old disconnected youth, the high school has been a failure, and most DY are too old anyway. For younger members of this group, say 16 – 18, community colleges have already begun serving high school age students, often in dual enrollment programs. For these youth, public four-year colleges are way out of reach. And adult ed programs and area vocational schools have been, by and large, miserable failures. So the community college is the best available candidate for creating a *system* of opportunities for DY.

At the same time, it's important *not* to think of the community college merely as the location for the creation of more "little programs". Community colleges are themselves full of "little programs", for special groups of students receiving services that other students don't get. Even though some of these are clearly valuable, it's inevitably the case that these "little programs" are present in a few colleges that receive special grants, but not in the majority of colleges; that very few students benefit from these "little programs", even in colleges that have them; that these "little programs" remain marginal to the college overall, and the central innovations of the programs are not incorporated into the rest of the college; and that they disappear as soon as their funding ends. Examples of such "little programs" are endless: the Puente program for Latino students, a fabulous model of a particular type of learning community but limited in its scope; most of the special programs created for welfare mothers; the PACE programs in California for older adults (largely women returning to college after child-rearing); and the list of initiatives that foundations usually consider when they evaluate alternatives to fund. The tactic of funding innovations encourages the creation of small innovations, which are inevitably "little programs"; and the tactic of wanting to evaluate innovations also encourages "little programs", *particularly* when evaluators contemplate random-assignment evaluation which by definition must be relatively small programs that students can be randomly denied access to. In contrast to the approach of creating more "little programs", whether in community colleges or in other settings like CBOs, the innovations I describe all have the potential for reshaping basic practices in community colleges. They may start as experimental or pilot projects, but they all have the potential to become widespread by changing common practices that are now supported with public funds.

In this note I'll first examine the value of creating "pre-community colleges" or bridge programs (section I); in short-hand, these approaches would address the problems of *access*. Then in Section II I'll examine an array of practices that need improvement no matter what institution is responsible for them, especially remedial or developmental education, guidance and counseling, financial aid and other support

services, the improvement of teaching, and co-operative education. Many of them address barriers to completion of coherent programs, and therefore address the problems of *progress*. Because educational reforms are inadequate to reducing inequality by themselves, or addressing all barriers to progress, Section III proposes a search for other social policies, complementary to educational reforms, that might convince this country to move beyond purely educational solutions. While there are many obvious barriers to implementing any of these reforms, Section IV addresses two particular problems with community colleges that foundations should recognize, the low status of the equity agenda and the absence of reform pressure in most community colleges. Section V address the special problems in California, since almost any reform agenda involving community colleges might want to invest in California, with its huge system of colleges. Finally, because this agenda for improving opportunities for DY has become impossibly vast, I wrestle briefly with the question of how to set priorities among these many reform options.

I. Developing Bridge Institutions: Issues of Access

While community colleges have prided themselves on their inclusiveness, in fact they draw most of the students from the middle of the relevant distribution — traditional-age students with middling grades, middling family incomes, and middling (and often inchoate) aspirations, and older students from the ranks of relatively experienced workers, many of whom seek additional skills for upward mobility. So community colleges don't tend to include individuals who need further education the most, including most disconnected youth. Many of these individuals may not be ready for community college courses because of inadequate basic academic skills; many are uninformed or misinformed about access to and costs of community colleges, and of the potential benefits; others have no particular plans; and some, because of their high school experiences, are actively hostile to educational institutions. One possible solution, then is to develop bridge institutions, or pre-college programs, that can

smooth the transition into community colleges. There are two promising ways of doing this, and a third riskier approach which may still have some potential in certain communities.

1. <u>Non-Credit Programs</u>. Some community colleges have developed non-credit programs that are in many ways more welcoming of DY and low-income adults (Grubb, Badway, and Bell, 2002). They cost less, and are more likely to be in community-based facilities, closer to where low-income students live; they are more flexible, less impersonal and bureaucratic than the credit divisions of community colleges; they seem to provide better access to immigrants because of fewer requirements for documentation including green cards; they are more supportive of students' short-run needs and goals (including employment) while maintaining their long-run hopes. They usually offer remedial education, ESL, short vocational programs, and they award informal certificates rather than state-recognized credentials. At their best, these programs include a variety of students services including guidance and counseling (see Section II.2), and they provide mechanisms of transition into the regular or credit programs including information mechanisms, articulation agreements, "field trips" to main campuses, the development of education plans with counselors, and support in the transfer and application process. Some of these non-credit programs, located in community settings, are close in feel and spirit to CBOs, and community colleges in British Columbia sometimes create "warm and fuzzy" community-based programs that do what adult ed programs purport to do.

While non-credit programs have many promises for reaching out to DY and disconnected adults, not many community colleges have developed them in this way. In most institutions, non-credit divisions are devoted instead to retraining and upgrade training for the experienced workforce. Thus one potential reform would be to support the creation (or conversion) of non-credit programs to serve as transitional mechanisms or bridging programs into the mainstream of community colleges. The critical issue is to make sure that transitional mechanisms are in place, since even those colleges with

large and active non-credit divisions serving low-income populations often lack bridges into mainstream programs.

2. Using CBO's. There have been some good examples of CBOs working with community colleges. Probably the best-known example is that of Project Quest in San Antonio, where the Industrial Areas Foundation has teamed up with the San Antonio community colleges. The colleges provide their conventional classroom-based programs, while the CBO recruits students, identifies for them the kinds of programs that are most likely to be beneficial (e.g., those with high wages and prospects for advancement), provides certain kinds of counseling, and advocates on their behalf when the college fails to recognize their special needs. Other examples of partnerships with CBOs have been collected by Brandon Roberts (2002). These are all good examples where the strengths of CBOs — their familiarity and trust within specific communities (including racial or ethnic communities), their recognition of a greater range of student needs in addition to classroom instruction, their advocacy roles — can be combined with the pedagogical and institutional advantages of community colleges. The problem is that such partnerships are not well-developed, and in many communities there are no CBOs to perform this role. One tactic for foundations, therefore, would be to support the development of such partnerships and the creation of local CBOs, (or local affiliates of national CBOs like the National Urban League or La Raza), as way of creating other kinds of bridge programs.

3. Adult Education Programs. In most communities, adult education programs supported by K-12 districts, or by libraries, or by various CBOs use federal and state funds to provide Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, and English as a Second Language to a variety of individuals including DY. Some states have area vocational schools under various names (e.g., ROC/ROPS in California, the BOCES system in New York) that in many ways overlap what community colleges are doing, though usually at a lower level. These institutions could also serve as a bridging institutions, as long as they develop mechanisms for transitioning their students into the mainstream of local community colleges. Unfortunately, these institutions are often

highly ineffective, and are usually insular and clannish; many community colleges report that their efforts to create links with adult education have been rebuffed. In most communities, therefore, this seems like a poor way to create a bridging program. However, it's possible that some adult ed programs or area vocational schools are more effective and open institutions, since some anecdotal information suggests that there are a few exceptional programs. Therefore, foundations might fund efforts linking community colleges in such communities only.

One way to decide among these two (or three) ways of creating bridge programs is to support community colleges with the proviso that *they* identify the most likely way of creating a bridge program. Community colleges are usually acutely aware of the other providers of education and training in their community, and are in better positions than any foundation to know which might be potential partners or the most effective in creating a bridge program. This also gives the initiative and the responsibility to *colleges* for developing bridge programs, in the hope of creating a pattern of such efforts across the country, rather than giving the initiative to a short-lived CBO or community-wide council.

II. Necessary Educational Reforms for Successfully Serving Disconnected Youth

No matter what education or training program is developed to serve disconnected youth, a series of reforms — often mentioned in passing, but usually ignored in their details — must be undertaken. I focus here on efforts to develop such reforms within community colleges, but it's important to recognize that organizations trying to serve DY in other settings — CBOs, or youth development programs, or area vocational schools — also face the same problems, though they are less likely to be recognized in these other programs. Here again, one advantage of focusing on community colleges is that these institutions usually recognize the seriousness of these issues, even when they have been unable to do much about them.

One of my underlying assumptions is that *progress* in community colleges, particularly progress toward obtaining a credential, needs to be emphasized much more than is usually the case. There's relatively good evidence that completing Associate degrees increases earnings, as well as job status. The effects of one-year certificates are smaller and less sure, and certainly vary substantially by field of study; the effects of small amounts of coursework are usually zero or small. I conclude that, in general, students need to complete Associate degrees or perhaps certificates, in the right fields of study, and then find related employment for their earnings to increase significantly (Grubb, 2002a, 2002b).

However, a contrary argument is that "new" students in community colleges are interested in taking only a course or two, for highly specific vocational purposes. From the perspective of consumer sovereignty, there's no way to counter the claims that students (at least adult students) should be allowed to do what they want. But there's also considerable evidence that many students are not sure what they want, and from this perspective more guidance and counseling may be necessary to inform them about the future consequences of their educational decisions (see Section II.2 below, on "experimenters" and guidance initiatives). It's necessary to confront the differences of opinion about what the high rates of non-completion in community college mean; for younger students, and disconnected youth in particular, failure to complete coherent programs means that they enter the labor force with competencies not much better than those of a high school graduate.

There are at least six areas in which reforms would help increase progress through these institutions:

1. Remedial or developmental education: The vast majority of DY surely need some kind of developmental or remedial education, in writing, reading, math, and sometimes basic science. While most community colleges have accepted the need for developmental education, the dominant teaching in these courses is still "skills and drills", dreary and ineffective. Drop-out rates are high, and the need to complete a long sequence of developmental courses delays any progress to completion. And there's no

concerted national movement to improve developmental education, though there have been many clarion calls for its improvement.

More specifically, at least four areas within remedial or developmental education merit improvement. One is to improve the pedagogical approaches in these subjects. In many colleges, individuals instructors develop their own alternatives to "skills and drills" that appear more effective, but these are idiosyncratic and individual solutions rather than institutional solutions. A promising institutional solution has emerged in a few colleges that have developed their own coherent philosophy and approach to developmental education, and have then prepared syllabuses, curriculum materials, and in-service education for new faculty (especially the part-time faculty who teach most developmental education) in order to provide a consistent approach to teaching.

A second improvement might be to develop curricula that could serve as models or templates for developmental instructors to use. One potential initiative would be to create a sample curriculum for developmental reading, writing, and math, following constructivist and project-oriented methods, *plus* an in-service training program to prepare instructors how to use this curriculum. (A curriculum without in-service education might simply deteriorate into a routine and uncomprehending delivery of the curriculum materials.) There are currently few materials available to instructors who want to depart from "skills and drills", and the creation of open-ended curricula — that is, curricula designed to be extensively modified to create local conditions and subjects — would provide at least a starting point for instructors and departments to use. It would also benefit individuals in adult education, job training programs, and CBOs that want to provide basic education but have no knowledge whatsoever of different pedagogical traditions.

A third issue to address is the articulation between developmental courses and "regular" or college-level courses. One approach has been to use learning communities to teaching developmental education (as well as ESL); in these cases two or more courses are linked, for example by teaching developmental reading and writing along with an automotive repair course (a sequence titled "Reading, Writing, and

Wrenches"!), or developmental English and math along with a biology course for aspiring health care workers. Foundations could certainly support additional colleges to follow one or another of these approaches to developmental education.

A fourth area needing improvement is the evaluation of developmental education, since very little is known about the effectiveness of this large component of the community college. For example, one initiative might evaluate the effects of different approaches, since there is currently very little evaluation of different pedagogical and instructional methods of teaching on subsequent progress.

2. Guidance and counseling:[2] Many young students who come to community colleges, and certainly many of those who might enroll in a bridge program, have no real idea what they want to do; these "undecided" or "undeclared students", or "experimenters", often take courses randomly in order to figure out what they might like to do. The phenomenon of students changing their majors many times also reflects an experimenting process, one that may or may not result in a stable decision. But, as one counselor expressed it, "If you don't know where you're going , you don't know how to get there", and so many of these "undecided" students may not finish programs, or may not finish them until they find a direction. Currently most community colleges offer a great deal of academic counseling, to help students select the courses necessary for completion or for transfer, but they offer relatively little career counseling to help students find a path. In additional to standard counseling (usually following the trait and factor model), they often offer a course or two in career paths, or College Success, or Personal Development, which seem to be admixtures of career exploration, study skills, and personal counseling — better than a 15-minute session with an overworked counselor, perhaps, but reaching very small proportions of entering students.

The opportunity for foundations would be to support other forms of career-oriented counseling, especially those promising initiatives that embed counseling in the curriculum and that provide other kinds of activities and experiences for students to learn about the opportunities they face. For example, the Puente program for Latino students includes a counselor with one or two instructors plus outside mentors,

creating learning communities in which counselors are involved along with instructors. Several college have created learning communities in which counselors teach about labor market options while an academic or occupational instructor teachers an introductory course (e.g., Introduction to Health Occupations); in another variant of learning communities, developmental instructors and counselors create learning communities intended both to strengthen basic skills and to provide more extensive support for "experimenters". And work experience and co-op education programs can also have tremendous value as forms of career exploration, since they allow students without much experience to see what different kinds of work are like (see Section II.6 below). My recommendation would be to stay away from supporting conventional counseling and instead to experiment with alternative approaches, evaluating the effectiveness of the results to generate a wider variety of approaches to guidance and counseling and to create more information about the effectiveness of different approaches.

3. Financial Aid: Community students are less likely to receive federal financial aid than students in other postsecondary institutions, even controlling for differences in tuition, the tendency to enroll part-time, and other such factors (Grubb and Tuma, 1991). Some of the fault lies in federal financial aid provisions, which are geared to students who have planned to enroll considerably ahead of the semester's beginning, while community college students often decide at the last minute; but some of the problem comes from under-staffed financial aid offices and poor information among students, who often over-estimate the costs of college and fail to realize that financial aid is available. The obvious intervention would be to strengthen financial aid offices in a number of community colleges, so that the neediest students receive more help in completing financial aid applications. A complementary policy would be to incorporate more information about financial aid into guidance and counseling mechanisms; for example, Puente's counselors usually run workshops about financial aid with students and parents, in order to correct misconceptions in the Latino community about the cost of college and the availability of aid. So the "solution" to the low rates of receiving

financial aid is probably something to be shared between financial aid offices and counseling offices.

4. Support services in general: The entire range of student support services in community colleges is under-funded, institutionally marginalized, separated from the faculty and the core academic and occupational subjects, and often quite unimaginative in what it does; faculty often have low opinions of these services. On the one hand, many people recognize the importance of support services if students — particularly low-income, or minority, or immigrant, or older students — are to make adequate progress. On the other hand, the insistence that "we're educators, not welfare workers" limits this recognition, and funding for student services is usually marginal. This dilemma exists at other levels of the education system — in high schools, for example — and a question is whether there are lessons and possible approaches that could be borrowed from other forms of education. In K-12 education and high schools in particular, the ideal of providing comprehensive services (or one-stop service centers) on the high school campus has been a dream for several decades; while such comprehensive centers are rare, they exist in enough schools to keep the vision alive. Often they operate by inducing community-based service centers to locate on the campus.

The parallel in community colleges would be to establish one-stop student service centers, mingling the services the college provides (tutoring, academic and career counseling, financial aid, special services for particularly groups of students like low-income students or older students) with services provided by CBOs like personal counseling, health services, community-based family support centers (see Section III.1 on family issues), drug and alcohol abuse programs, and other services. Indeed, the location of service centers on college campuses — or on the campuses of non-credit divisions and other bridge programs — might also lure more disconnected youth and other low-income individuals to a place where they could also learn more about post-secondary education options. Foundations might therefore support some colleges to

explore and develop student service centers, again providing examples where colleges and CBOs could work together rather than in competition.

The other, more common model in high schools is to refer students to community services available elsewhere, but then there is usually no check on whether the students do receive services, and no way to bridge the different cultures of the school and of community-based organizations. One helpful step in some high schools has been to hire school social workers, or school psychologists, to provide this referral function. Such individuals can work with faculty to help identify students in need of special services; they can serve as caseworkers, following students and making sure they receive the services they need; they can help bridge the different cultures of different organizations, for example by explaining the particular needs of students to community-based organizations. Foundations might therefore experiment with establishing school psychologists or social workers in a few colleges, drawing on university programs that already exist, and then monitoring the effects on colleges and on access to services among students. While such an approach would benefit a large range of students, one would expect that it would disproportionately benefit disconnected youth.

5. Improving teaching: The community college likes to think of itself as the "teaching college", but in fact relatively few colleges use their institutional resources to improve the quality of teaching in any consistent way (Grubb and Associates, 1999). The one-sentence summary of this problem is that colleges have attracted a non-traditional student body — and the incorporation of more disconnected youth would make that even more true — but without markedly shifting away from traditional teaching. While it's difficult to document the effects of improved teaching on learning outcomes and on progress, it's certainly true that many disconnected youth have failed to learn adequately under traditional teaching in their earlier schooling, and it's unclear why more of the same will somehow work at the community college level. There's evidence from K-12 education that constructivist pedagogies improve the learning of students, especially low-income students; and at the community college level there's at

least a *prima facie* case that improving the teaching they receive will improve their progress, though there's a huge research agenda necessary to confirm this case.

There are many institutional mechanisms to improve the quality of teaching including restructuring the instructor's role so that he or she does not have so many distractions from teaching; reducing the use of part-time instructors, a widely-supported change that requires substantial additional funding; changing hiring, promotion, and tenuring practices to consider the quality of teaching more carefully; introducing mentoring programs for new teachers and pre-service programs to prepare instructors to teach under the special conditions of community colleges; developing more effective forms of staff development or in-service education, including long-term rather than one-shot efforts and workshops that engage faculty in conversation with one another rather than simply listening to lectures by outsiders; creating methods of classroom observation and discussion groups based on observation to improve teaching; funding innovations like learning communities and shifts in approaches to developmental education; and changes in administration, to select and train administrators who are knowledgeable about and supportive of improving teaching. See Grubb and Associates, 1999, Ch. 8 for examples of these practices.) It would be straightforward for foundations to support any or all of these.

A powerful alternative would be to fund a series of Instructional Centers in a number of community colleges. These Centers, in the few colleges where they exist,[3] support a wide variety of teaching innovations like learning communities, on-going forms of staff development, mentoring programs, classroom observations, mini-grants and release time for instructors to develop new approaches, seminars around special teaching issues (like project-based teaching, or teaching immigrant students, or Writing Across the Curriculum). Instructional Centers are relatively inexpensive, since they can be created with only two or three people. They have a broad range of possible influences, though obviously some practices they might champion — reducing teaching loads, or converting part-time into full-time instructors — are very expensive.

6. Work-based Learning and Cooperative Education: This country has periodically flirted with different forms of work-based learning, most recently during the 1970s and then during the 1990s with the School-to-Work Opportunities Act — both without substantially changing the dedication to work-based learning. The benefits of work-based learning are several, especially for disconnected youth: it is a way to explore different career options; it provides a form of learning that is (or should be) complementary to school-based learning; and it often provides an entrée into employment. A very few community colleges have established extensive programs of co-operative education, particularly in the Cincinnati area and at LaGuardia Community College (Villeneuve and Grubb, 1996; Grubb and Badway, 1999), and these approaches are common in health professions and some engineering programs. But they have never become widespread, despite their potential benefits. The most recent efforts to support work-based learning, the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994, failed both because of piddling funding over a short period of time (five years), and because funds were spent on conventional services —for example, conventional guidance and counseling — rather than on the more difficult problem of getting employers and educators together. The obvious lesson is that reversing the neglect of work-based learning and the withdrawal of most employers from any responsibility for education requires more sustained efforts over longer periods of time.

Foundations might consider supporting work-based learning in several colleges, thereby creating connections between these colleges and the employment community. (Indeed, the connections created in developing co-op programs are much more substantial than are the usual connections through industry advisory committees; see Grubb, 1996b, Ch. 6.) This basically requires hiring co-op coordinators for each college, who are then responsible for recruiting employers and creating connections between employers and specific programs (usually occupational programs) within the college. It's helpful if the local business community has a Roundtable or Chamber of Commerce that can serve as the coordinator of business efforts, though many communities lack such organizations. The development of work-based learning requires substantial

cooperation from faculty (especially occupational faculty) and from the college as a whole, and it cannot be seen as a quick innovation. But it certainly would provide substantial benefits to a variety of students, especially disconnected youth, and it is also supported by the desires of colleges to establish closer connections to other local groups including the business community.

III. Beyond the Community College: Complementary Social Policies

The innovations in Section II are all changes that community colleges can undertake on their own, albeit with additional funding and external sources of information and guidance. However, community colleges cannot be wholly successful by themselves, particularly in serving a high-need group like disconnected youth. In this section I therefore explore the complementary social policies that would be necessary in order to make the college more effective. I argue that it is impossible to have egalitarian educational institutions, or to provide equality of educational opportunity, in a highly inequitable society, and pinpoint specific social policies that might help community colleges be more effective.

At least three studies based on interviews with community college students indicate that the primary cause of dropping out, or making real progress, is the work-family-school dilemma — the fact that most community college students (and many disconnected youth as well) have jobs to support themselves. Many also have families that demand their attention (especially for women who have children early), all while they are attending college (e.g., Gittell and Steffy, 2000; Matus-Grossman and Gooden; California Tomorrow, 2002). If they attend school, they may be compelled to commit themselves to work and to family first, trying to fit in schooling around a demanding work schedule.

Balancing the demands of work, family, and schooling creates serious problems for many students. When their complex arrangements for child care, work schedules,

and school schedules fall apart, or when a family crisis intervenes, they may simply

have to drop out of college. In many more cases the external demands limit their

engagement with schooling. As one student described his situation:

> The thing I'm pretty much astounded by is the amount of homework, you know,
> I knew that there was going to be homework in college, but trying to balance out
> everything else that we're doing in our lives, it's like the homework is just
> overwhelming, and especially if you're doing 50 hours at work and then, you
> know, we have families, you know – I have three kids. So you know, you go
> home at night and you're trying to juggle the kids, put them to bed, and then try
> and do all this homework. Sometimes it's overkill.

The demands of family life are usually summarized as child care needs, which

are certainly important; but family issues may include resentment from spouses or

partners or parents, physical abuse, and problems with extended family members who

require their attention. The work-family-school dilemma means that students often

develop precarious arrangements for meeting their different obligations, but then any

small change — different work hours, a change in a class schedule, a car breaking

down, a family incident, the loss of child care — may cause the arrangement to break

down. Schooling, the least pressing of these obligations, is usually the first casualty.

There are, to be sure, steps that colleges themselves can take to address the work-

family-school dilemma. They can establish employment offices which provide access to

better-paying jobs, and jobs linked to students' interests; currently, most such offices

usually have only "stay-in-school" jobs providing only minimal support. Some states

provide child care funding and centers on campuses, though these are usually

inadequate. Counseling is sometimes available for personal problems (though most

colleges refer individuals with serious personal problems to counseling off campus),

and it's possible to imagine creating Family Support Centers to deal with a range of

family issues. And colleges already have various forms of flexible scheduling of classes

so that students can take classes at odd hours including evenings and weekends,

though no doubt flexibility could always be improved. But the areas of work and family

life really involve areas of policy outside of education, and suggest initiatives that emanate from other agencies and funding sources. If foundations decide to concentrate their efforts in a small numbers of communities, therefore, they could work to establish complementary social policies with other public and private agencies. For example:

• Local child care policies could be developed that give some priority to students in community colleges and non-credit centers.

• Family Support Centers or other counseling services could be developed in the community to help both students and others wrestle with the issues of family life. Sometimes child care information and referral centers have taken on such activities, for example.

• Local economic development efforts could include the upgrading of "youth" jobs so that they pay more, and are available with more flexible scheduling.

• Low-income students are particularly vulnerable to small crises — a car breaking down, a family emergency, an episode of poor health — because they live so close to the margin, with little financial cushion or support from others (including other family members). It's difficult to know how to create a public response to these emergencies, but a center of some kind — perhaps, again, a Family Support Center — could provide quick help for students who find themselves in a temporary emergency, so that they need not drop out and then have to start their schooling all over again.

• In some areas, housing shortages contribute both to the instability of family life and to the fiscal pressures on students. A local housing initiative could include, disconnected youth and other needy community college students.

Over the long run, foundation-sponsored initiatives are probably inadequate to the solution of these non-educational issues. It will be necessary instead to have *national* welfare policies, housing policies, urban renewal policies, employment policies, child care policies, and mental health policies that address these needs of individuals trying to get back into the mainstream, and that consider the complementarities among policies. (For one such example, see the appended proposal for welfare reform legislation, "No Adult Left Behind".) What foundations could do is to establish such

policies on a small scale and document their effectiveness in helping disconnected youth and others make their way through serious education programs.

IV. Barriers to Reform

There are, of course, many barriers to implementing the suggested changes, including recalcitrant administrators, unwilling faculty, opposition to special treatment of any group of faculty or of students (what I call the politics of resentment), possible union or faculty Senate opposition, and the difficulty of devising effective solutions. These are obvious, and with the right arguments can be overcome. But there are three special barriers that it's important to recognize in making community colleges the focus of a program for disconnected youth:

1. The equity agenda has relatively low status within the community college — as within our society as a whole. The transfer function, and workforce development providing training for specific employers, have much higher priority, the first because it serves high-status academic goals, the second because it may serve high-status members of the community. As one example of the status issue, most non-credit education is now designed for upgrade training and re-training, not the inclusion of low-income youth and adults. Something is necessary to enhance the equity agenda within community colleges, since an enduring commitment to reforms such as those I have outlined requires that colleges view equity as a central mission, not a peripheral one. Whether a shift in status requires much more public funding, a public information campaign, a shift in the attitudes of the business community and other public leaders, or a rebirth of 1960s culture and politics is unclear to me, but foundations might give some thought to how to elevate the equity agenda. My own belief is that this issue is a good example of what Clarence Stone (1998) calls (in the K-12 context) civic capacity, or the willingness of all segments of a community to rally around its educational system ("it takes a village . . "); the variations in civic capacity help explain the ability of different cities to reform their schooling systems. While community college presidents

are often active in reaching out to other segments of their community, educational leaders by themselves cannot create the kinds of cooperation that fosters civic capacity — and so creating civic capacity, and using it to bolster the equity agenda, requires more than colleges by themselves can do.

2. Community colleges are not, by and large, self-reforming institutions. In the CCRC study now underway, there are many examples where faculty and administrators acknowledge recurring problems, and have recognized them for some time, but have not taken any steps to ascertain the magnitude of the problem, the causes, and the potential solutions. (A counter-example, however, is Miami-Dade Community College under Robert McCabe, as described in Roueche and Baker, 1987). Furthermore, there are few state pressures for reform, though accountability is starting to affect community colleges, and there's certainly no national reform agenda as there is in K-12 education. A foundation certainly cannot create a reform movement by itself, but if foundations decide to focus on certain community college innovations, they might simultaneously try to create the conditions for self-reforming colleges to continue the process of change on their own.

3. The overall funding of community colleges is precarious; they are funded much more poorly than the other segments of higher education, and they have fewer alternatives sources of revenue. As a result many of them have little organizational slack for reform, and they often are forced to use additional funds for existing commitments rather than real reform.[4] The solution to their funding problems is again beyond the power of foundations, but this is an issue that can undermine all efforts at reform and improvement if it remains unresolved.

IV. The Special Case of California

California has a disproportionately large community college system, so it's natural for any foundation thinking of working with colleges to support some California efforts. Unfortunately, the conditions for reform are worse in California than

in most other states: the funding limits are more serious; the burden of state regulations is heavier, but without the state providing any real leadership or direction for innovation); the battles between faculty and administrators are more persistent, at least in many colleges. In the words of a prominent community college president from the Midwest, in an e-mail to me:

> I've spent since 1969 working on community colleges in FL, OK, TX, and NE, also have been a consultant for the North Central Association in about ten states. Based on these exposure and regular connections with community college people in may other states, I am confidant that California Community Colleges are the worst off.
>
> No one else has AB1725,[5] no one else is as isolated and parochial, the economic forecast here is among the very worst, demand for services is increasing more rapidly than virtually any other state, the volume of faculty and staff retirements is unsurpassed, the role and mission appears to be the most out of date of any of the states. All these factors combine with frequently-encountered faculty and staff who are simply dispirited.
>
> I also am shocked with often hearing statements implying superiority of the California Colleges! Then there's the strangle-hold the unions have on state-level as well as local governance. I just can't believe that this behemoth can be effectively transformed incrementally.

Furthermore, it's not clear what the way out of this mess is; at a seminar at U.C. Berkeley in fall of 2001, none of the participants had any idea even how to start a discussion leading to solutions!

If a foundation wants to play a role in resolving the problems of California, the most useful activity would be to use its convening function — the willingness of individuals to come to meetings sponsored by a distinguished neutral party — to bring together individuals who might then start a conversation about directions for California colleges and policy. There have been such convenings of some groups: presidents, board members, faculty Senates, unions representatives, legislators, members of the state Board and of the Chancellor's Office. It would be desirable to now convene a group with sufficient outsiders so that the insiders could not simply replicate their recurring conflicts. This suggests a group where perhaps one third of the members would come from inside California colleges, with all factions represented; one third

would come from other California groups with an interest in education including the business community, the community of advocates, local officials from outside of education, and (dare I say it) the academy; and most importantly, one third would come from community colleges outside the state of California. The purpose of non-Californians would be to try to overcome the intense parochialism of the California colleges, which constantly claim that special conditions in California — its size, its racial and regional diversity, the unique structure of the Master Plan — make it completely unlike any other state. Representatives from other states could illustrate how they have addressed problems that have become intractable in California. A series of meetings, lasting perhaps over two years, with the specific task of coming up with a blueprint for reform, might make some headway in this impasse. It would necessarily have to be followed by the usual public consideration and debate, but at least such a group might be able to identify promising directions for the future rather than simply settling back into old conflicts.

VI. Thinking about Priorities

Unfortunately, by this point I've outlined an agenda for addressing the needs of disconnected youth that is much larger than any foundation could fund. The issue is then how to think about establishing priorities among these potential reforms. There are three obvious alternatives (and surely more that I haven't thought of):

1. Abdicate the responsibility for setting priorities by funding a number of colleges, and letting them decide the most pressing ways to incorporate disconnected youth, the best local partners (including CBOs) to include, and the most urgent needs of this group. There would be considerable information value in seeing how different colleges make decisions about how to serve disconnected youth, and the results might provide new models for doing so. On the other hand, such a tactic would generate a great variety of different programs and would be difficult to evaluate. And of course

this tactic assumes that the colleges are competent to formulate coherent plans on their own and to implement their plans successfully.

2. Convene a community-wide group, larger than a local college, for the purpose of setting priorities. A community-wide group might be better able to represent the needs of disconnected youth, to bring in the special abilities of community-based organizations, and to link college efforts with non-educational policies. On the other hand, a community-wide planning group risks getting bogged down in the usual political rifts and turf issues, particularly in some communities where different institutions have been at odds with one another. This approach would generate an even greater variety of non-comparable outcomes, though of course this might be not be bad.

3. In the usual approach, the foundation would establish priorities, and would then fund a certain number of projects improving developmental education, another set of projects improving guidance and counseling, and so forth. This provides maximum control over the kinds of initiatives that would be developed, and would increase the likelihood of roughly comparable programs and the potential for evaluation. But specifying discrete reforms assumes that each can be effective in helping disconnected youth succeed. If instead there are a set of reforms that are individually necessary but not individually sufficient — if helping disconnected youth requires several joint changes within community colleges and perhaps CBOs — then this tactic will not work. Indeed, the fundamental flaw of "little programs" is often this kind of fragmented approach. In contrast, funding a college to develop its own plans would allow a series of complementary reforms to emerge.

My own preference would be to combine #1 and #3: to fund several colleges to develop coherent plans, *as long as* they contain certain specific elements. The elements I personally would stress include a bridge program of some sort (Section I); reforms in developmental education (Section II.1); some efforts to incorporate support services including guidance and counseling (Section II.2 and II.4); efforts to develop work-based learning to address several issues simultaneously including career exploration, financial

support, and the development of "soft skills" in some realistic way (Section II.6); and an exploration of Family Support Centers.

However, I don't want to end on the difficulties. Community colleges are the right institutions — indeed, the only institutions, as far as I can see — that could address the multiple complexities of re-integrating disconnected youth back into the economic and cultural mainstream of our society. So much of the structure and vision of community colleges is already in place, and appropriate for this difficult goal. It remains for larger numbers of colleges to understand precisely how they might support disconnected youth, and for states to see how they might fund innovations. These tasks provide opportunities for foundations to support substantial reforms that could reshape basic practices in community college, rather than adding to the complex of "little programs", in ways that would benefit a wide variety of potential students.

Footnotes

[1] This note draws upon my own research on community colleges, cited throughout the text, as well as on-going research with the Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia; on a book in progress with Marvin Lazerson, tentatively entitled *The Vocational Roles of American Schooling: Believers, Dissenters, and the Education Gospel,* that includes chapters on community colleges, job training and adult education, and equity issues; on outreach and program improvement efforts that I sponsor through the Community College Cooperative at U.C. Berkeley; and on recent work on high schools for the National Academy of Sciences and on guidance and counseling for OECD and the European Union.

[2] This section is based on Grubb (2003), drawing on case studies of 16 community colleges carried out by the Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.

[3] See the description of several such centers in Grubb and Associates (1999), Ch. 8.

[4] A good example is federal funding for vocational education, which are almost always used for upgrading courses and purchasing new equipment — changes which one might think should be the responsibility of core funding rather than of federal funding intended for program improvement.

[5] AB 1725 is a piece of legislation passed in 1988 that instituted a system of "shared governance", in which faculty and staff have certain prerogatives in the governance of community colleges. Rather than making decision-making more democratic and inclusive, it has worked in most colleges to sharpen political divisions and make reform exceedingly difficult.

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**No Adult Left Behind:
An Education and Work First Policy for TANF Reauthorization**

TANF and the booming economy of the late 1990s have been successful in reducing the old AFDC rolls substantially. But former welfare recipients typically received little education or training; they work in low-wage jobs susceptible to economic fluctuations, and they have not been able to escape poverty.

The critical need for current and former welfare recipients, and for the working poor, is access to education that would enable them to obtain middle-wage jobs. The principal institution enabling adults to do this is the community college, which provides both short- and long-term programs for many kinds of employment plus further education in four-year colleges. In contrast, short-term job training programs and adult education programs provided through K-12 districts are generally ineffective, and they do not lead to the longer-term education necessary to escape poverty.

However, substantial evidence now confirms that many low-income adults are unable to complete community college programs. The major reason for dropping out is the tension among schooling, employment, and family: it's almost impossible to balance all three, and those who try find that any little glitch — a sick child, a changed schedule, a difficult class schedule — forces them to leave schooling.

One solution is for TANF (and secondarily student aid) to provide income support, to reduce the pressure from employment, and also child care, to reduce family-related problems. TANF and student aid revisions would therefore help resolve the schooling-employment-family barriers.

Therefore TANF should be re-authorized with an education platform allowing for recipients to be enrolled in:
   • community college programs leading to a one-year certificate or two-year Associate's degree, particularly in relatively well-paid occupations;
   • non-credit or adult education or bridge programs in community colleges, as long as they provide access to credit-bearing certificate and Associate programs.
   • programs developed jointly by community colleges and community-based organizations. As long as they allow access to credit-bearing certificate and Associate degree programs.

   • Simultaneously, student aid legislation should be amended to allow grants to be provided to welfare recipients and the working poor attending community colleges part-time, as long as they are making progress toward a credential.

• Finally, a pilot program of institutional grants to states and local community colleges could support non-credit or bridge programs, links to credit programs, and changes (like flexible schedules, learning communities, and student services) to support low-income students.

The combination of revisions in income support, in child care, and in community colleges themselves would provide avenues to permanent independence, not just temporary employment.

Disconnected youth are less likely than their more advan-taged peers to have informal, social networks that they can use to find entry-level employment. For this reason, they reap the greatest benefits when municipal leaders "organ-ize the job market" by seeking job pledges from local employers and then setting up a process by which young people can apply for those jobs. The Albany Department of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) uses an innovative "Service Navigation System" to connect young people to secondary and post-secondary education, job training and employment, community service, substance abuse counseling, and recreational opportunities.